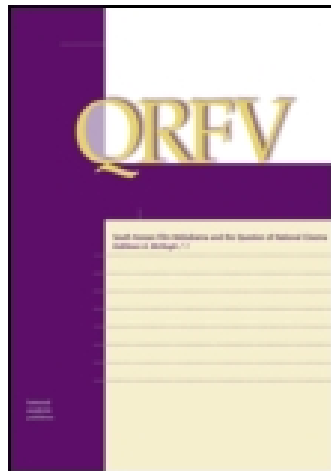


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### Cold War Confessions and the Trauma of McCarthyism: Alfred Hitchcock's I Confess and The Wrong Man

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## **Cold War Confessions and the Trauma of McCarthyism: Alfred Hitchcock's *I Confess* and *The Wrong Man***

ROBERT GENTER

In his 1952 autobiography, *Witness*, Whittaker Chambers, the self-confessed ex-Communist and star witness of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, recounted his experience as an editor at *Time* magazine shortly before he made his public declarations in 1948 about his previous espionage activities. He described how his colleagues at *Time* would often enter his office, lock the door, and reveal to him intimate details about their lives—their fears, their sins, and their sufferings. According to Chambers, “they would sit down, and after a rambling preamble, suddenly confide to me some distress that was destroying their peace or their lives.”<sup>1</sup> His office, explained Chambers, had become a confessional of sorts.

Chambers was being quite disingenuous when he stated that he could not understand why his fellow editors needed to expose themselves in such fashion; in many ways, Chambers was the prime example of the mid-twentieth-century confessional self, someone driven by political and self-imposed pressure to testify about his personal history.<sup>2</sup> Throughout endless congressional hearings, courtroom trials, and an eight hundred page autobiography, Chambers compulsively confessed to every aspect of his life—from his brother's suicide to his own Communist party activities. Like his colleagues at *Time*, Chambers hoped that his confessions would serve a therapeutic function, helping him to come to terms with his troubled past and helping to realign him with the moral authorities at HUAC. As he explained, the duty of every witness called before Congress was to “testify to every crime, every sin, every evil, that he had committed or that had beset his life without reserve.”<sup>3</sup>

As historians have long noted, confessions by ex-Communist party members such as Chambers about their past espionage activities helped usher in widespread governmental investigations into Communist subversion, giving rise in the late 1940s to the seemingly endless procession of federal employees forced to testify before loyalty review boards about their pasts.<sup>4</sup> This spectacle of forced confessions began in 1947 when President Truman signed Executive Order 9835, officially establishing a federal employee loyalty program. Overseen by the Loyalty Review Board, the program empowered federal agencies to investigate the backgrounds of all federal employees and to dismiss those for whom there were “reasonable grounds” to believe they might be disloyal.

The program was amended in 1953 by President Eisenhower with Executive Order 10450, which mandated that review boards focus not just on an employee's loyalty but more

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importantly on the interests of “national security” in determining an individual’s suitability for a federal job. Thus, review boards were to consider not just whether or not a potential or current employee might engage in espionage or treason but whether or not an employee possessed the suitable character, in terms of past and current behavior, to work for the federal government.

Employees were consequently forced to testify not only to political affiliations but also to their views on foreign policy, labor relations, marriage, race relations, and economic policies and to their personal relationships, sexual orientations, family histories, drinking habits, friendships, etc. In many ways, this demand for employees to produce a complete account of their life histories bordered on the demand for self-beratement that Michel Foucault has famously associated with subject formation—the interpellation of the self by juridical authorities who ordered, under the threat of punishment, the interrogation of the psychic interior of the self.<sup>5</sup>

For friendly witnesses like Chambers, such public confessions were personally welcomed, serving as a means of atonement for past actions. As he explained to FBI agents in 1949 when he finally decided to reveal the homosexual activities he had engaged in as a young man, “I tell it now only because, in this case, I stand for truth. Having testified mercilessly against others, it has become my function to testify mercilessly against myself.”<sup>6</sup> But for unfriendly witnesses—those with something to hide, those troubled by the political implications of such hearings, or those with the more immediate concern about losing their jobs because of embarrassing past transgressions—these forced public confessions were debilitating at best.

Throughout the early 1950s, an enormous debate emerged over the legality of such confessions, coerced or not. Two issues were paramount: the first was whether or not such forced testimony violated the right against self-incrimination guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment; and the second was, if such loyalty programs were constitutional, what were the limits to what an individual could be forced to confess. In 1954, the U.S. Congress passed the Compulsory Testimony Act, designed to circumvent the ability of witnesses to cite the Fifth Amendment as a way to avoid testifying. The Compulsory Testimony Act stated that witnesses under investigation for “crimes” related to the “Communist conspiracy” could use the Fifth Amendment only to prevent prosecution on evidence they were forced to give but not to refuse to testify in general.<sup>7</sup> In *Ullman v. United States* (1956), the U.S. Supreme Court declared the act constitutional, arguing that once the threat of prosecution was eliminated, the right against self-incrimination ended. This constitutional wrangling over the litany of Fifth Amendment cases was, however, unimportant in comparison to the growing assumption that those witnesses who invoked this right did so because they were in fact guilty.

As Senator Joseph McCarthy explained, “a witness’s refusal to answer whether or not he is a Communist on the ground that his answer would tend to incriminate him is the most positive proof obtainable that the witness is a Communist.”<sup>8</sup> Naturally, most defenders of these investigations were much more subtle than McCarthy. Confession, argued proponents, served two purposes: first, confession helped to alert naïve citizens to this growing threat and to bolster patriotic support for the Cold War; and second, confession helped to cleanse the souls of those guilty of transgressions. For both conservatives and anti-Communist liberals, confession marked the transition from innocence to maturity. As literary critic Leslie Fiedler argued in his 1951 commentary on Chambers’s revelations, “the qualifying act of moral adulthood is precisely this admission of responsibility for the past and its consequences, however undesired or unforeseen.”<sup>9</sup>

Others were not so easily convinced, and saw these forced confessions as the worst form of coercion. For instance, two psychologists, Marie Jahoda and Stuart Cook, studied the effects of security measures on the morale of federal employees, arguing that recent investigations had done much to create a hostile atmosphere within government offices and, more importantly, had made federal employees considerably anxious about the pressure to reveal their backgrounds.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, as more and more witnesses were called before investigation committees, this debate over confession exploded within the culture as a whole, a debate that originated in judicial arguments about the right against self-incrimination but that eventually swelled into a discussion about the nature of confession itself.

One of the most determined commentators on the role of confession in modern America was the famed film director Alfred Hitchcock, whose legendary fear of political and legal authority made him quite sensitive to what critic Elmer Davis described in 1952 as “the lucrative home market for exposures and revelations” ushered in by Chambers and others.<sup>11</sup> Although many of his films dealt with the threat that espionage posed to the safety of the nation, Hitchcock always worried about the excesses of the national security state. As Cary Grant’s character in *North by Northwest* (1959) argues to federal agents in criticizing the government’s manipulation of Eva Marie Saint’s character to stop an espionage circle, “perhaps you ought to start learning how to lose a few cold wars.”

Indeed, in Hitchcock’s films from the 1950s, McCarthyism was depicted not merely as a culture of surveillance, represented by Jimmy Stewart’s character in *Rear Window* (1954), whose scopophilia served as the perfect metaphor for the surveillance practices of the FBI, the Justice Department, and next-door neighbors, but also as a culture of self-surveillance, represented by Ingrid Bergman’s character in *Under Capricorn* (1949) whose extended confession about her marital infidelities is compelled by juridical and psychological pressures. Hitchcock was concerned from the beginning of his career with the ways in which political and self-imposed pressures forced individuals to reveal personal secrets.

But two films in particular—*I Confess* (1953) and *The Wrong Man* (1957)—explored the causes and effects of confession, depicting in detail the trauma of McCarthyism on the psyche of American citizens. The question for Hitchcock was why so many people were willing to incriminate themselves, willing to betray their neighbors, and willing to divulge their pasts. Why had confession become so compulsive in the postwar period? What social changes had given rise to the confessional self so ubiquitous in the age of McCarthyism? What were the political and psychological effects of these forced confessions on interrogated witnesses? And most importantly, what limits might be established to halt these forced and often compulsive confessions?

One of his lesser known films from the 1950s, *I Confess* deals with many of Hitchcock’s favorite themes—the problem of mistaken identity, the effects of personal betrayal, the trauma of war, and the complexity of religious doctrine. Set in Quebec, the film tells the story of the murder of a lawyer named Villette by the German caretaker of a local parish church, Otter Keller, who, soon after committing the act, returns to the church and confesses his crime to Father Michael Logan, a young priest who has been quite generous to Keller and his wife Alma over the years. Unable to tell the local authorities for fear of breaking the seal of confession, Logan is watched pensively by Keller and Alma, both of whom struggle with their guilt over the crime. Compounding Logan’s moral dilemma is the fact that police investigators soon begin to suspect that Logan is the actual murderer, especially after two witnesses claim they saw a priest fleeing Villette’s house and after Logan refuses to confess to his whereabouts on the night of the murder. By coincidence, Villette had been

blackmailing Logan's former lover, Ruth Grandfort, over a benign but secret meeting she had had with Logan prior to his ordination.

Eventually, the investigators discover that Ruth had been with Logan the night of the murder and force her to confess the details of their prior relationship. Hoping that her confession will provide Logan with an alibi, Ruth only implicates him further, providing the authorities with a supposed motive for the crime. Although the jury at his trial finds him not guilty, simply because there was no compelling evidence, the mob inside and outside the courtroom believes that Logan is guilty and viciously confronts him. Overcome by guilt, Alma steps forward to defend Logan, only to have her husband shoot her dead. At the end of the film, the police chase Keller into the ballroom of a nearby hotel where he reveals that he was in fact the murderer. Eventually shot by the police, Keller gives his last confession and is absolved by Father Logan.

Although the film centers on Father Logan's struggle to not break the seal of confession even though his life is at stake, Hitchcock is in fact more concerned with the proliferation of confession within Western society, in particular, the way in which political authorities in the 1950s were forcing average citizens to confess to past transgressions. Indeed, *I Confess* is a story about how the murder of a lawyer no one knew, who had no known associates and no immediate family, leads to a false accusation and a number of confessions unrelated to the actual crime. Embedded within the film are obvious references to the political situation in America—the threat of mob violence, the litany of obvious transgressions of Fifth Amendment rights by police authorities, and the paranoia of average citizens. Three moments in the film in particular directly invoke the domestic atmosphere of the early Cold War. The first occurs soon after Villette's murder when Logan and Ruth secretly meet on a ferry to discuss the accusations made by the police. Knowing that the authorities have probably followed them, Ruth and Logan talk under a cloud of paranoia, desperately peering in the faces of the other ferry passengers, all of whom seem to be watching them suspiciously.

In such an environment, Logan knows his presumed guilt might easily taint Ruth. As he explains to her, "we shouldn't be seen together for your sake. . . [The police] are trying to figure out who you are." The second moment occurs during Logan's trial in which the prosecutor relentlessly interrogates Ruth about her relationship with Logan. His abrasive inquiry as well as his insistence that she only answer yes or no to his questions echoed the litany of televised congressional hearings on Communist subversion that featured aggressive, if not belligerent, questioning. As Ruth desperately tries to explain to the prosecutor who is "twisting [her] words," certain questions "cannot be answered that way." The third moment occurs towards the end of the film after Logan has been proclaimed innocent and is greeted by an angry crowd outside the courthouse. Echoing the mob mentality that Hitchcock associated with the Communist witch hunt, the crowd refuses to believe in the jury's decision, choosing instead to issue their own verdict by hurtling insults at Logan. Like many witnesses called before congressional committees who were deemed guilty by the witnessing public despite the lack of credible evidence, Father Logan suffers for the crime committed by another.

In fact, Hitchcock's film emerged at the very moment of a widespread legal reevaluation of the constitutionality of this relentless interrogation of witnesses, whether such interrogations occurred in front of congressional committees or in the back rooms of police stations. As the tremors of McCarthyism began to recede after 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court rethought the parameters of the right against self-incrimination, arguing that the forced compulsion to confess by those taken into custody was a violation of the Fifth Amendment. In a series of cases in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including *Fikes v.*

*Alabama* (1957) and *Spano v. New York* (1958), the Court began overturning a number of criminal convictions on the grounds that the excessive use of certain interrogation tactics by questioning authorities—extended isolation, sleep deprivation, expressions of assumed guilt, presentations of fabricated evidence, etc.—had created a situation in which the will of the interrogated subject had been so overborne that the subject was compelled to speak even though he might incriminate himself. Eventually, in *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966), the Court, in a direct rebuke to such practices, safeguarded the right against self-incrimination by requiring that interrogated subjects be presented with a series of warnings that iterated their Fifth Amendment rights.

In this sense, Hitchcock's criticisms of interrogation tactics in this pre-Miranda landscape echoed the criticisms the Warren court would make several years later. In particular, Hitchcock foregrounds the relentless questioning by Inspector Larrue of Ruth Grandfort who is forced, despite protests from her husband Pierre, to testify to her previous love affair. Presented with eyewitness accounts that she had been seen meeting privately with Logan after the murder, Ruth details the reason why Villette was blackmailing her, even though Logan begs Larrue to "consider if your line of questioning has to be so personal." Throughout Larrue's relentless questioning, both Logan and Pierre interrupt him, reminding the Inspector that Ruth is not under oath. On the verge of tears, Ruth asks Larrue: "Are you a human being, Inspector? Do you think it's important for me to tell you why I was being blackmailed? You don't care whom I hurt?"

Ruth's impassioned plea for understanding flew in the face of long-standing interrogation techniques widely used in the 1950s. In a litany of police interrogation manuals such as *Fundamentals of Criminal Investigation*, questioning authorities, for instance, were told to "interrogate steadily and without relent, leaving the subject no prospect of surcease" and to rely on "emotional appeals and tricks," practices that were quite successful in encouraging witnesses to testify but practices that Hitchcock, and later the Warren Court, found both unconstitutional and inhumane.<sup>12</sup>

But in case viewers missed the legal argument of *I Confess*, which was buried beneath the Gothic motif of the film, Hitchcock retold this story about a wrongfully accused man more directly in *The Wrong Man*, a film that reiterated his concerns about the overbearing tactics used by legal authorities. Famously based on the real-life story of a Stork Club bass player from Jackson Heights, Queens, Christopher Emanuel (Manny) Balestrero, who was arrested in 1953 for supposedly committing a series of local robberies, *The Wrong Man* was Hitchcock's most pointed criticism of the American legal system, portraying in semi-documentary fashion the emotional turmoil that Manny, his wife Rose, and his two young boys experienced. Shot on location in Queens, Hitchcock's film was designed to capture in detail the questionable methods used by police authorities in establishing the guilt of an individual. Indeed, a series of unfortunate coincidences lead the police to suspect Manny, in particular, his physical similarity to the actual criminal which causes several witnesses, including the employees of a recently robbed insurance company, to falsely identify Manny.

Much of the film centers on the ways in which the local detectives prove Manny's guilt and on the endless ways in which a person might be forced to incriminate himself. Hitchcock in fact dwells upon the criminal proceedings, demonstrating the inherent vulnerability of any accused person to protect themselves without proper legal safeguards. Throughout the police investigation, during which Manny repeatedly asks "Am I being accused of something?" he is forced to incriminate himself in countless ways—he is sent to the various stores where the robberies took place so he can be identified by employees, he is forced to confess to his financial hardships, he is forced to participate in a criminal lineup, and he is forced to give a handwriting sample to compare to the various holdup notes. Throughout the

rest of the film, Manny and Rose struggle to prove his innocence, an ordeal that pushes Rose to the brink of madness and that leads to her eventual institutionalization in a psychiatric hospital. Despite the overwhelming evidence against him, Manny is eventually acquitted when, by chance, the real criminal is caught trying to rob a local grocery store.

But despite Manny's good fortune, *The Wrong Man* comments on how precarious the situation is for those charged with committing a crime—the lack of legal protection, the obvious violations of the Fifth Amendment, the helplessness of incarceration, the overwhelming financial expenditures, etc. Indeed, much like *I Confess*, Hitchcock's portrait of Manny Balestrero's ordeal reiterates the director's continual fear of the American judicial system. As he explained in relation to the film: "I've seen many stories about the arrest of an innocent man from the point of view of his champion—a lawyer or reporter, and so on. It's never been told from the point of view of the person who underwent this ordeal."<sup>13</sup> In so doing, Hitchcock hoped to reveal the endless violations of constitutional rights occurring in this widespread assault on political subversion.

But the relentlessness of interrogators in a pre-Miranda world did not adequately explain why so many Americans in the early Cold War were willing not only to forgo their constitutional rights but to divulge openly, if not almost compulsively, their pasts. In many ways, Hitchcock was just as worried about the psychological sources of confession as he was about the legal ones. Indeed, the dramatic movement of *I Confess*, for instance, is not generated simply by Logan's struggle but by the endless confessions by others—Otto, Ruth, and Alma—that drive the story. In particular, Hitchcock is concerned with why individuals confess at all. Why would a murderer like Otto openly admit his crime? Why would a married woman like Ruth openly admit in the court of law her love for another? Within the culture of the early Cold War, Hitchcock sensed an internal compulsion to confess, a compulsion that police authorities and congressional committees were more than willing to use to their advantage.

To the famed director, this compulsion signaled a troublesome weakness in his fellow citizens. Hitchcock, certainly, was not the only one to sense this. Indeed, debates about this apparent compulsion to publicly disclose the self had become an inherent part of the national discourse of the 1950s, in what social critic Harold Rosenberg referred to as the "Confession Era in the United States."<sup>14</sup> This discussion started during the Korean War when American newspapers began to report on the so-called "germ warfare confessors."<sup>15</sup> Twenty-three American airmen, including a Marine pilot Frank Schwable, had been captured by the Chinese during the war and had publicly confessed to participating in germ warfare bombing raids against Communist soldiers. These false confessions, which were the most publicized example of American prisoners of war collaborating with the enemy, brought to national attention the complicated psychological sources of self-incrimination. Many of these soldiers, including Colonel Schwable, were placed on trial when they returned home. The resounding question was not just whether or not Schwable was guilty of treason but what had compelled him to confess to his captors in the first place. Psychologist Joost A.M. Meerloo defended Schwable at his original inquiry hearing, arguing that this compulsion to confess had deep psychological origins, a complicated outcome of a general neurotic disturbance that was intensified by the stressful pressures of modern life.

In his popular 1956 work, *The Rape of the Mind*, Meerloo provided an extended discussion about the psychological origins of this apparent compulsion to confess. While he began by focusing on the germ warfare confessors, Meerloo was quick to argue that the apparent failure in patriotic duty by these strong-willed soldiers was part and parcel of the larger problem of the weakening of the American mind in a turbulent, rapidly changing world. The rape of the mind, according to Meerloo, occurred everyday. As he argued, "it

is now technically possible to bring the human mind into a condition of enslavement and submission.”<sup>16</sup> Modern means of mass communication, mass advertising, and mass political persuasion had eroded man’s sense of independence and rational self-control, leaving him isolated, confused, and overwhelmed. “The mechanization of modern life,” argued Meerloo, “has already influenced man to become more passive and to adjust himself to ready-made conformity.”<sup>17</sup> The result was the infantilization of the American population, as “hidden feelings of guilt” and “infantile hostility and destructiveness” were aroused by this outside pressure and were mobilized to align the individual with the demands of society at large.<sup>18</sup>

The primary example for Meerloo was “the current wave of Congressional investigations,” which demonstrated not only the coercive influence of interrogation practices but also the submissiveness of most witnesses who were willing to inform on themselves and their neighbors. “The power to investigate,” argued Meerloo, “may become the power to destroy—not only the man under attack, but also the mental integrity of those who, in one way or another, are witnesses to the investigation.”<sup>19</sup> Any interrogation, according to Meerloo, unearthed deeply buried emotions and yearnings, which in turn unconsciously informed how witnesses responded to questioning authorities. Following the conventional wisdom of most in the psychology profession, Meerloo traced this compulsion to confess to failed parent-child relationships, a product, he argued, of large-scale social and cultural upheavals in recent decades that had distorted traditional family structures and had produced self-destructive, masochistic personalities burdened with guilt and overwhelming anxiety. As he explained, “consistency of child-rearing, emotional security at home, and lifelong conditioning to acceptance of the various challenges of life—all these are the factors that determine how we will react when we are put to the test.”<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, endless discussions about the psychological damage done to ordinary citizens by recent widespread political, economic, and social upheavals permeated the national culture in the 1940s and 1950s, in what was quickly labeled the “age of anxiety.” For instance, historian and political commentator Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in his popular 1949 book, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom*, summed up conventional wisdom in describing the existential panic of the postwar years. Echoing the claims of many in the psychoanalytic community, Schlesinger argued that the recent world war, which had led not only to holocaustic destruction but to the historical upending of traditional political, economic, and familial structures, had driven many, if not most, individuals into a pathological state of despair. “Western man in the middle of the twentieth century is tense, uncertain, adrift,” argued Schlesinger, “we look upon our epoch as a time of troubles, an age of anxiety.”<sup>21</sup> He linked this anxiety to three transformations: first, the completion of industrialization had led to the rise of monopolistic economic institutions unresponsive to individual demand or initiative; second, the public sphere had been overtaken by the loudspeaker of mass media; and third, the dominance of science and technology had not only upended traditional ways of living but had paved the way for atomic annihilation.

Fearful of the world he had inherited and overwhelmed by the complexity of modern life, the ordinary citizen lived in a frightening state of uncertainty. The result, according to Schlesinger, was that many were now driven into the trappings of authoritarian politics, into a compulsive conformity with prevailing institutions, into a slavish dependence on external authority, or into a private pathological state. “Man longs to escape the pressures beating down on his frail individuality,” explained Schlesinger, “and, more and more, the surest means of escape seems to be to surrender that individuality to some massive external authority.”<sup>22</sup> Like Meerloo, Schlesinger argued that the rise of mass society had led to a new generation lacking in the ideals of autonomy, independence, and rationality, a generation of citizens that had developed the “impulses of sadism and masochism” to stem feelings of



“loneliness and rootlessness.”<sup>23</sup> Slavish dependency, according to the famed historian, had become the unfortunate norm.

Many commentators, including Hitchcock himself, echoed such worries over the political and economic castration of man by modern bureaucratic structures. Indeed, all of Hitchcock’s films from this period, as historian Robert Corber has argued, meditate on the loss of any coherent sense of identity in a world controlled by unresponsive, bureaucratic institutions.<sup>24</sup> In *North by Northwest* (1959), for instance, Cary Grant’s Roger Thornhill, despite his high-level position as an advertising executive, struggles to claim a stable identity for himself when he becomes a pawn in the government’s determined but underhanded struggle against domestic subversion. In *Rear Window* (1954), Jimmy Stewart’s L.B. Jeffries, whose photojournalist career is halted because of a broken leg, becomes obsessed with the daily activities of his neighbors, an artificial, voyeuristic substitute symbolizing his castrated state. Indeed, Hitchcock’s films from the 1950s are littered with characters who are at first seemingly independent, determined spirits but who reveal themselves to be emotionally and physically dependent, if not masochistic, personalities struggling to find a place for themselves in a hostile world.

For instance, Manny Balestrero in *The Wrong Man* appears in the beginning of the film to be a typical middle-class male breadwinner with unending affection for his wife and children. But as Hitchcock’s camera follows him through his daily routine, Manny is clearly anything but a successful paternal figure. He is trapped within a dull routine—a lonely train ride home from work, a banal late night meal at the local diner, and a silly interest in the arithmetic used to bet on horses; he is also a failure as a breadwinner—excluded from the upper-class revelries at the club where he works, unable to keep himself out of debt, and unable to provide his wife with proper dental treatment; and he is clearly very submissive—willing to give into the immediate demands of his children and his mother, willing to passively submit to the endless orders of the detectives who arrest him, and willing to unquestioningly follow the professional advice of the legal and psychiatric authorities he encounters.

Like many Cold War liberals, Hitchcock searched for an analytic lens with which to explain such submissiveness and, like Schlesinger and others, turned to the language of psychoanalysis. Most of his films from this period, including *Rope* (1948), *Strangers on a Train* (1951), and *Psycho* (1960), explore the damage done to man’s psyche by the disruptions of the Second World War. Following the claims of orthodox psychoanalysts, Hitchcock argued that the widespread neurotic and psychotic behaviors in his fellow citizens—the compulsive actions, the criminality, the sexual deviance, the tormenting guilt, and the overwhelming paranoia—were caused by disruptions to normative Oedipal development in a world of endless upheavals.

Indeed, discussions within the psychoanalytic community about the problem of the submissiveness of modern individuals were ubiquitous in the 1950s. The most influential voice was psychiatrist Edmund Bergler, whose numerous works, including *The Basic Neurosis* (1949) and *Neurotic Counterfeit-Sex* (1951), focused on what he referred to as the problem of “psychic masochism.” A refugee of war-torn Europe and a member of the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, Bergler was disturbed by the numerous damaged, dependent personalities he encountered in his private practice. “Why,” asked Bergler, “do people have such an insatiable unconscious craving for self-damage?”<sup>25</sup> In his contribution to postwar psychoanalytic theory, Bergler argued that the formative but scarring moment in individual development was when the infant, clinging to the naïve belief that all of his physical and emotional needs were self-satisfied, encountered a blow to his “megalomania” when he recognized his actual dependence on his mother as caregiver.

According to Bergler, the infant maintained fantasies of omnipotence until subjected to the painful discovery that his life was regulated by the “Giantess of the nursery.” Forced into an insufferably passive position, the infant reacted either sadistically to this “witch,” who now seemed “capable of starving, devouring, poisoning, choking, and castrating him,” or, under the vicissitudes of the drives, masochistically by accepting, if not enjoying, such punishment.<sup>26</sup> The only antidote to such a situation was the child’s eventual identification with the father who, because of his strength, was able to “[demote] the threatening and fear-inspiring ‘witch’ of boyhood from her position of power.”

But the eclipse of paternal authority, caused by the social dislocations of the war, by the economic and sexual emancipation of women, and by the replacement of the family as the moral center by the rise of mass society, had negated the transition to “asexual filial affection.”<sup>27</sup> The result, according to Bergler, was a lingering libidinal attachment to the passive position in the nursery. Finding satisfaction in failure and erotically attached to punishment, the psychic masochist courted dependent, if not violent, relationships. Thus, Bergler identified psychic masochism as “a life technique of people who—despite conscious ignorance of so doing—are unconsciously lovers of humiliation, defeat, [and] refusal.”<sup>28</sup>

In this way, psychoanalysts such as Meerloo and Bergler elevated masochism as the key dysfunction, revealing the inherent drive towards self-destruction within man. Psychic masochism, according to Bergler, had become a ubiquitous problem in an age of overwhelming political and economic institutions that played upon man’s residual dependency. “Whether or not,” argued Bergler, “the psychic masochism of humanity will prematurely ‘solve’ the problem of masochism via an atomic deluge, before proper safeguards can be established against the psychic cancer of the human race... is a matter of hope.”<sup>29</sup> This psychic masochism was characterized by three traits: first, a tendency to minimize the self by revealing personal inadequacies; second, a drive towards dependency in which the individual merged his own identity with another for support; and third, a corresponding anxiety about the surrounding world, which was seen as hostile and threatening.

Such a person “pities himself extensively and consciously as the innocent victim of human malice, and—at the same time—enjoys unconsciously in outwitting his inner conscience psychic masochistic pleasure.”<sup>30</sup> Following Freud, Bergler identified masochism with the death instinct itself—that primary drive to return the self to an inorganic state. But to avoid any accusation that the individual actively sought such displeasure, this masochistic drive was often covered over by a pseudo-aggression against threatening others. “I shall not be conscious of my wish to be refused and initial provocation of refusal,” Bergler’s imagined psychic masochist proclaimed, “and shall see only that I am justified in self-defense, righteous indignation, and pseudo-aggression because of the refusal.”<sup>31</sup> In this search for more punishment, the psychic masochist openly admitted to endless personal indiscretions, admissions that acted simultaneously as a plea for punishment and for love.

For psychiatrists such as Bergler and Meerloo, the widespread appearance of this weakened personality, bent on self-destruction, had not only revealed the masochistic drive at the heart of man but had opened the door for legal authorities to manipulate this unconscious enjoyment of punishment. Indeed, the compulsion to confess that Meerloo claimed was so widespread in the 1950s was supposedly the product of this masochistic subject, one whose desire to confess needed only subtle prompting by external authorities. As Meerloo explained, “the very fact of prolonged interrogation can re-arouse the hidden and unconscious guilt in the victim.”<sup>32</sup> Any confession about any transgression, argued Meerloo, merely produced more guilt that in turn called for another confession and therefore even greater punishment, in an endless dynamic of verbal disclosure and self-abasement.

The two main confessions in *I Confess* reiterate such psychoanalytic readings of the compulsion to disclose the self; indeed, Hitchcock always saw within confession a sign of psychological dysfunction. The first confession, which occurs at the beginning of the film, comes from Otto Keller, the caretaker who murdered Villette. Keller is a classic Hitchcockian figure, an impotent, seemingly castrated, psychologically damaged man displaced from the centers of power, overly anxious about his fate, and prone to violence and deceit. Keller is a displaced German refugee, a “man without a country, alone,” a failed husband unable to care for his wife who is consequently forced to work “so hard” to keep them afloat, and a struggling caretaker in debt to Father Logan who has provided him with “a home, a job, even friendship.”

Indeed, Keller exhibits all of the traits that postwar psychoanalysts such as Bergler and Meerloo associated with the masochistic personality. Throughout the film, Keller minimizes his own personal significance and lingers over his obvious inadequacies, making his existence seem almost accidental, if not, inconsequential. “No one can help me,” Keller explains to Father Logan, “I am a man without a home.” Keller even refuses to take responsibility for his actions, especially his murder of Villette. “I’m not a murderer,” he whines, “it was an accident.” He is also slavishly dependent on those around him—from his wife Alma, whose continual support makes him “cry to see her work so hard,” to Father Logan whose “kindness” Keller admits he has “abused.” Finally, Keller is paranoid about the world around him, in particular, the legal and religious authorities with whom he is in contact.

As he explains to Inspector Larrue, “I’m always afraid of the police,” a statement that parallels his growing fear of Father Logan who also holds his fate in his hands. His dependency on such figures, based upon his sense of powerlessness, explains not only his call for mercy but also his obvious hostility, marked in large measure by his hypersensitivity to any sign of neglect. Indeed, Keller’s continual violence throughout the film (his murder of Villette, his false incrimination of Father Logan, and his murder of Alma and a hotel employee) is matched by a groveling for absolution from those around him. Keller in fact confesses to his crime four separate times—to Father Logan in the church the night of the murder, to his wife immediately after, to Logan again in the church rectory the next day, and to police authorities in the ballroom of the hotel just before he is shot to death.

Hitchcock traces Keller’s dysfunction to his failure to accede to the paternal position, marked by his inadequacies as a breadwinner and as a husband, by his status as a refugee with no homeland, and by his dependent relationship with his wife. Exemplified most clearly in the scene in which he confesses his crime to Alma, Keller clings to his wife, who functions less as a lover and more as a maternal figure, a sign of his stunted psychological growth. Having clearly never internalized the authority of the father under the auspices of the Oedipal moment, Keller, according to Hitchcock, never gained any basis for personal autonomy. As such, any sense of authority for Keller remains externalized, posited in punitive outside agencies and expressed by his rigid adherence to conventional values.

This uncritical acceptance of authority, according to Hitchcock, has led to Keller’s masochistic enjoyment of obedience. Having no internal source of independence or moral guidance, Keller suffers from an attachment to this external superego, embodied in the figure of Father Logan upon whom he is emotional and economically dependent and to whom he must confess his transgressions. Keller’s “psychic masochism,” in this sense, stems from his failed search for independence in a world that keeps him in the nursery, a man who has been reduced to menial tasks such as filling the church with flowers, fixing flat bicycle tires, and prying open all of the stuck windows in the rectory.

His longing for exposure and punishment is derived from his ongoing guilt over his failures, which in turn has obviously aroused latent aggression within him. Keller’s

senseless murders throughout the film are therefore both a form of sadistic revenge against those to whom he is dependent (Villette for money and Alma for support) and an outlet for his masochistic desire for punishment, a desire that can only be satisfied by his endless confessions to the authorities. Indeed, Keller even stages a literal scene of disclosure on the stage of the ballroom in the hotel where he seeks refuge. Keller's final confession becomes a theatrical event—a demonstrative exhibition of his guilt in front of police authorities and the man whose reputation he has destroyed. "It is your fault," Keller tells the listening audience, an obvious plea for understanding and absolution.

Keller's confession sets the action of the film in motion; the second, and more significant, confession comes from Ruth Grandfort, whose admission to police authorities of her previous relationship with Father Logan not only unravels her own marriage but provides, according to prosecutors, an apparent motive for Logan's suspected murder of Villette. Although Hitchcock demonstrates the intense legal pressures placed upon Ruth, he also stresses her own internal compulsion to confess, resulting in her extended fifteen-minute description of her prior relationship to Logan, depicted in an extended flashback and melodramatically shot in soft focus. As Ruth explains to her husband, "I'm going to answer whatever questions the Inspector wishes to ask me," a promise that the Inspector is willing to indulge. Indeed, the problem for Hitchcock was not merely the compulsion of psychotic individuals like Keller to confess to the criminal activities but the compulsion of innocent victims like Ruth to admit to benign transgressions. According to Hitchcock, the collapse of the paternal order had done irreparable damage not only to those like Keller who have lost their fatherland but to modern-day women like Ruth who have endured psychic harm by disruptions to traditional gender relationships.

As many film scholars, including Tania Modleski, have repeatedly noted, many of Hitchcock's films, including *Notorious*, *Rear Window*, and *Vertigo*, feature women who are unable to succumb to the Oedipal moment, that is, women unable to purge their excessive sexuality and to assimilate to the patriarchal order.<sup>33</sup> He was not alone in expressing such concerns. Both during and after the war, psychoanalysts, sociologists, and medical doctors issued warnings about the traumatic effects of the destabilization of traditional gender roles caused by the mass movement of women into wartime employment. For instance, psychiatrists Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia Farnham argued in their popular 1947 book, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, that such women had become a "bundle of anxieties" caused by the "price of feminine relinquishment."<sup>34</sup> Calling for federal subsidies to encourage women to forfeit employment outside the home, their book was one of many volumes to criticize the apparent emotional and psychological imbalances caused by the war. In her two-volume opus, *The Psychology of Women*, psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch similarly detailed what she referred to as the modern woman's growing "masculinity complex."<sup>35</sup> According to Deutsch, the demands of the Second World War had aroused "active and aggressive" tendencies within women, placing them in conflict "with the woman's environment and above all with the remaining feminine inner world."

In his portrait of Ruth Grandfort, Hitchcock echoed such worries over the psychic harm that the war had done to such women. Indeed, the economic dislocations of the war had led Ruth, like many other women, into employment outside the home, and the emotional dislocations of the war had led her into a hasty marriage with Pierre who, in turn, is unable to control Ruth's actions and unable to win her love. As Hitchcock explains, Ruth's unwillingness to cede to her husband's demands was a reflection of a widespread revolt of women seeking personal independence, reflected in the parliamentary debate early in the film over the demand by female teachers for equal pay. But in Ruth's case, her delinquency towards her husband is caused by her refusal to forgo her love for Logan, a form of

unregulated sexual desire that not only challenges her marriage vows and Logan's religious vows but reflects her own damaged condition and produces her belabored confession.

As Logan pleads with her, "I want you to see things as they are. . . and not go on hurting yourself." For Hitchcock, Ruth is unable to properly grieve her loss of Logan, choosing instead the melancholic solution of incorporating her lost love within her own ego as a way to phantasmatically retain their relationship; as Ruth explains, "I was selfish even then."<sup>36</sup> In her melodramatic retelling of her relationship, beginning with her romantic descent from her apartment into Logan's waiting arms and ending with her last night with him on the island, Ruth reveals her inability to let go of Logan, which has resulted in her refusal to move forward or to acknowledge that time has passed. Following the trajectory of melancholic identification, Ruth has disavowed her loss by magically restoring her departed love within the dynamics of her own ego, lingering continuously over this dreamlike scenario. But, as Hitchcock explains, her withdrawal of love from the outside world into the internal realm of her ego has mandated the transformation of her desire overall, as her ego struggles in vain to substitute for her lost love. Continuously failing to live up to Logan's ideals, which she refuses to recognize even after he details to her the reasons for his religious conversion, Ruth berates herself for her deficiencies, setting up a critical agency that levels all of the accusations against her that she in fact wants to make against Logan. Her disowned rage accounts for her drive towards self-exposure, resulting in her confession of her failures to Pierre and to her sexual transgressions.

Indeed, Ruth is haunted by her actions, embodied literally in the figure of Villette, who functions in the film not merely as Hitchcock's infamous MacGuffin but more importantly as a spectral presence who appears at the key moments—her marriage to Pierre, Logan's ordination, and her last night with Logan—that mark her transgression. According to Hitchcock, Ruth has failed to subordinate her desire to either the paternal demands of her husband or the religious commitments of Logan, that is, she has refused her assigned place within the patriarchal order. But the effect is traumatic, as Ruth berates herself throughout the film for her actions. Her confession then is the result of thwarted love and thwarted grief, a desperate attempt by Ruth as a melancholic subject to punish herself for the trauma inflicted by another and thereby to continuously beg for a second chance. For Hitchcock, Ruth's guilt over her unruly desire is easily manipulated by police authorities who are more than willing to let her confessions destroy her marriage so they might uncover evidence to convict Logan. In the end, Ruth finally accedes to paternal authority—religious and familial—when she recognizes at the conclusion of the film that Logan is in fact now a man of faith, and that her place rightfully belongs with her husband; as she says to Pierre in her final words of the film, "take me home." In finally severing her attachment to Logan, Ruth has finally accepted her place within the paternal realm and has forsaken the desires that led to her masochistic urge to confess. She has finally been silenced.

Hitchcock was not merely making a psychoanalytic point about the problem of confession; indeed, both *I Confess* and *The Wrong Man* are broad swipes at what Michel Foucault has termed the rise of the "confessing animal" in modern Western culture. In making a Catholic priest the center of *I Confess*, for instance, Hitchcock was deliberately contrasting the nature of religious confession with the nature of legal confession, arguing that the latter was a perversion of the spiritual intentions of the former. In so doing, Hitchcock was trying to salvage the Christian conception of confession, one marked by an image of the self formed not by the narrative generated by the excavation of the past but by a relationship to God. Born to English Catholic parents, who "were devout regular churchgoers and very strict with the children," and educated at St. Ignatius College, Hitchcock was quite familiar with the sacrament of confession, a practice that his teachers made him repeatedly perform

as a young man and a practice that he supposedly retained as “a churchgoer and a steadfast Catholic throughout his life.”<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, a Catholic presence, in both subtle and iconographic ways, continuously appeared in his films, including the act of confession, which played a pivotal role in films such as *Foreign Correspondent* (1940) and *Under Capricorn* (1949). But *I Confess* was his most open discussion of religious confession, detailing the struggle of a wrongfully accused priest unwilling to break the seal of confession in order to save his own life and demonstrating the importance of confession to the Christian conception of the self. The question for Hitchcock was how to silence the litany of politically-imposed and self-imposed confessions ubiquitous in the 1950s, and the solution he found ironically rested in the resuscitation of traditional Christian confession.

Confession has historically played a fundamental role in Western conceptions of the self. As Michel Foucault has detailed, even before confession was made into a sacramental duty in 1215 in the Fourth Lateran Council, Christianity utilized confession as the key practice in moral cleansing. According to Foucault, confession within Christianity historically took two separate but related forms. The first was *exomologesis*, a form of confession in which the individual publicly accepted his status as sinner and penitent, “not a verbal behavior but the dramatic recognition of one’s status as a penitent.”<sup>38</sup> This recognition entailed public demonstrations of shame and humility that were designed to absolve the sin while simultaneously revealing the sinner. Thus *exomologesis*, as Foucault explains, was not a verbal confession but a theatrical one, a confession that dealt not with the particularities of the crime itself but with the sinner who came into being.

The second mode of disclosure was *exagoreusis*, developed later within the Christian tradition, marking an even more developed form of confession. *Exagoreusis* was an elaborate process of self-examination in which the penitent continuously verbalized his thoughts as a means to uncover hidden desires and motives not immediately apparent but nonetheless revealing something fundamental about the penitent’s actual character, a form of disclosure addressed to a confessor with the power to absolve. This more pronounced form of confession represented the beginning of the modern “perpetual work of hermeneutics,” that is, the continual scrutiny of the interior of the self as a way to track down those desires that interfered with the will.

But the goal of both forms of confession was the same—the renunciation of the self that sin had brought into being. Indeed, the purpose of Christian confession was the objectification of that self, unearthed as defiled and dirty and renounced in the spirit of martyrdom. Confession was practiced, according to Foucault, in a spirit of “affirmation or change—of rupture with one’s self, with one’s past *metanoia*, of a rupture with the world, and with all previous life.”<sup>39</sup> This martyrdom marked the movement from an old self residing in darkness to a new self grounded in the otherness of God, a self that perpetually surpassed its past incarnation through its own symbolic death.

Christianity has not maintained exclusive control over confession. In both *I Confess* and *The Wrong Man*, Hitchcock demonstrates the ways in which modern forms of confession—psychoanalytic and legal, for instance—have utilized, albeit under different circumstances, the practice of making the interior exterior established by Christianity. In particular, both psychoanalysis and law, as Foucault has noted, have inherited Christianity’s intense focus on sex, seeing within sexuality the key to basic human desire and therefore to the individual’s deepest self. Both disciplines function primarily through this hermeneutics of the self. The goal is the creation of a narrative discourse that serves to construct the individual as a particular kind of subject compelled by a particular kind of sexual desire and a narrative discourse that is compelled and shaped by a psychoanalytic or legal expert.

Much like a sinful confessant disclosing himself to a priestly confessor, both the “talking cure” and the police interrogation demand the verbalization of the interior self to a discriminating auditor. But both practices differ from Christian confession in that neither call for the martyrdom of the self. Indeed, both are predicated on the reverse; where Christianity calls for self-denial, law and psychoanalysis call for self-revelation. Unlike Christian confession, these modern “technologies of the self” fashion a positive image of the self, one fashioned according to the normative categories of their respective disciplines. As the House Un-American Activities Committee and other congressional committees made more and more accusations about the character of witness, many critics challenged the legal and psychiatric constructions of individual identity used to condemn such witnesses.

Reflecting on the litany of confessions forced by Joseph McCarthy and his compatriots, critic Harold Rosenberg, for instance, argued that modern hermeneutics of the self, fashioned within a charged political situation, pivoted on the reduction of the life of the individual to one particular act motivated by one particular sexual proclivity. As such, law, psychiatry, and even congressional committees, according to Rosenberg, dealt with “identities rather than personalities,” that is, with individuals whose histories have been reduced to one piece of damaging evidence.<sup>40</sup> As Rosenberg explained, “with regard to individuals the law thus creates a fiction, that of a person who is identified by the coherence of his acts with a fact in which they have terminated. . . and by nothing else.”<sup>41</sup> Left out of the courtroom and the congressional hearing was any recognition of the individual as a self that continuously overcame its previous incarnations throughout a lifetime of personal awakenings.

In *I Confess*, Hitchcock details how the practice of legal confession has perverted the original intentions of religious confession. Indeed, the main problem that Father Logan faces throughout the film is not merely his inability to account for his whereabouts on the night Villette was murdered but his inability to convince anyone that his religious conversion and subsequent ordination resulted in a fundamental change in his character and therefore in his previous desires. For instance, Ruth cannot believe that her continual feelings for Logan are not reciprocal even though he has made her well aware of how his wartime experience has led him to God. “I haven’t changed,” Ruth tells Logan, “I’ve been married for seven years and I haven’t changed . . . You’re in love with me, you’ve always been in love with me, you haven’t changed.”

In fact, the main piece of evidence used by the prosecution against Logan and the point emphasized by those jury members who do not believe Logan is telling the truth is the obvious assumption that Ruth and Logan “did not just spend that one night together . . . there must have been many more times.” Indeed, the problem for Logan, according to Hitchcock, is that the legal system deals only with the construction of a fixed identity, a self whose motives and behaviors remain stable and therefore predictable over time. He is reproached by the law for his past that he believes has been erased by his ordination. Hitchcock demonstrates this most clearly during the police interrogation scene in which Inspector Larrue first presents Logan with the evidence against him, a conversation in which this legal authority and this religious authority talk past one another; as Larrue himself admits, they are clearly “not thinking from the same point of view.”

Despite the fact that he recognizes that “prying . . . can be very embarrassing” and that he must “jump from one detail to another” when questioning witnesses, the Inspector is admittedly determined to unearth “every scrap of information” and to peer through the “mystification” of Logan’s statements. For Larrue, the law has the right to consider every past decision and every known desire of witnesses when pursuing a criminal case,

a fundamental elision between the public and the private that Logan finds uncomfortable. Logan admits that he has a much more “methodical mind,” one that has to “take things one by one” and a mind that will only acknowledge those details strictly related to the matter at hand. Logan wishes to leave in darkness what the law wishes to bring to light. The Inspector, instead, wishes to acknowledge the interconnectedness of events, arguing that even seemingly innocuous moments register the contours of desire and therefore reveal the overall character of the individual. He demands an autobiographical statement.

Logan’s religious faith provides him the fortitude to resist the Inspector’s demand to provide a coherent account of his life; others, however, as Hitchcock demonstrated, were not as capable. Indeed, the secondary narrative in *The Wrong Man* concerns the trauma done to Manny’s wife Rose, who suffers a mental breakdown caused by the legal pressures to unearth her past. Such pressures, according to Hitchcock, had disastrous psychological consequences. Indeed, Manny and Rose are forced to confess in three ways in the film. First, they must expose their financial and familial failings, in particular, their ongoing indebtedness caused by Rose’s dental problems. Second, they are forced to provide their defense attorney with the “full story” about their “life and work,” a story that is officially transcribed by his assistant. Third, they must provide a coherent account of their past actions on the night of each robbery that Manny has been accused of committing, a process that will hopefully produce an alibi but that requires them, as their attorney explains, to “make a thorough check-up” of their pasts and to “dig into [their] memories and into any records [they] may have.”

Consequently, they are forced to visit the vacation home in which they stayed on the night of one of the robberies and to search in vain for other guests who might corroborate their story. This forced excavation of their past proves to be too much for Ruth who quickly succumbs to what the psychiatrist in the film refers to as a “landslide of fear and guilt.” As Hitchcock explains, Rose’s disintegration is due to this pressure to unearth her past, a process that makes her re-experience all of the failures that led to their current predicament and that only intensifies her guilt. “I was guilty,” Rose explains, “they were after *me*.” Indeed, the excavation of her past does not produce some sort of truth to save Manny but merely uncovers a layer of shame, disgrace, and self-loathing within her. Such autobiographical digging, according to Hitchcock, mandated the repetition of past traumas and past failures, a repetition that provides neither closure nor relief for Ruth but that unearths a masochistic, self-destructive drive within her.

As their search for an alibi grows more and more futile, Rose begins a downward spiral of self-beratement that leads her to separate herself from her family. “Nothing can help me, no one,” Rose tells Manny at the end of the film, “it doesn’t matter where I am.” She sees herself at the mercy of unnamable forces that not only demand an account of her past that she is unable to provide but also demand retribution for her maternal failures. “They wanted to punish me,” cries Rose, “because I failed him.” In this sense, for Hitchcock, the litany of forced confessions littering the political scene in the early Cold War were debilitating not simply because of the public nature of such events but because the nature of confession itself was destructive, revealing an inherent tendency toward self-incrimination, if not self-annihilation.

The question for Hitchcock therefore was how to halt this compulsion to confess—not merely by calling for legal limitations on interrogation practices but also by assuaging this internal drive towards exposure in general. His solution was to resuscitate the practice of Christian confession, not in the sense of the continual verbalization of the self’s psychic interior but in the sense of the mortification of the self whose true being was found in the otherness of God. The main concern of *I Confess*, in this regard, is not merely whether



or not Father Logan will break the seal of confession to save himself but the steps a man of faith must go through to gain absolution for the sins he has committed. In so doing, Hitchcock turns to the earliest form of Christian confession, *exomologesis*, in which the confessant does not verbalize his wrongdoings but accepts his status as sinner through a visible demonstration that allows him to overcome his past self. Hitchcock was not completely rejecting verbal confession, but he was clearly trying to curtail its importance.

For instance, the only other figure besides Keller who enters the church's confessional, presumably to detail his sinful actions to Father Logan, is a young boy, making the practice of *exagoreusis* seem juvenile. Indeed, the second half of the film, from Logan's belabored walk through town during which he meditates on his fate to the dramatic courtroom drama in which he is verbally and physically abused, centers on Logan's decision to not confess to the facts of the case but instead to make a public but silent confession to his status as a sinner. As Logan explains, he "never thought of the priesthood as offering a hiding place." Logan recognizes that he is in fact guilty, not of the crime with which the police charge him but of damaging the lives of Ruth and Pierre because of his inability to disclose the truth. Logan knows that he has made both of them suffer, forcing Ruth into the awful position of having to confess to her past even though she is not implicated in the crime.

In so doing, he offers neither a genealogy of his own self nor an intense scrutinization of his past. Logan's task is not to excavate some private truth residing in his inner self but to confess to the truth of the Christian faith. "I choose to be what I am," Logan tells Ruth, "I believe in what I am." His journey throughout the film in many ways leads to his symbolic death, allowing him to take the place of the guilty Otto Keller and to endure the consequences of their collective sins. Logan remains silent throughout the film, repeating the line "I cannot say" to all questions asked of him. But his sacrifice has revelatory power, not just for himself but also for Ruth who finally recognizes that Logan has in fact changed dramatically since she first met him. After she realizes the sacrifice Logan was willing to make to not break the seal of confession, Ruth turns to Pierre and says "take me home," which presumably means that Logan's actions have in some way repaired her own troubled self. Like Augustine, who was "more concerned with confessing the truth of the Christian faith than with telling the truth of the author," Logan looks upward to God to find himself and not to the litany of past deeds that led him away from God.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, according to Hitchcock, the end of confession came through the grace of God who terminated what was ultimately, as the confessants in both films learn, an endless process of self-exposure. Like Father Logan, Manny in *The Wrong Man* suffers through his ordeal in silence, recognizing that he is in fact guilty not of the crimes with which he is charged but of failing his family. His ultimate confession is not a verbalization of his past deeds but a silent prayer to God, an act he commits at the prodding of his mother who begs him to stop believing he "brought it on [himself]" and to "pray for strength." Standing before a portrait of Jesus, Manny eventually does pray, an act that results in the arrest of the guilty party. For Hitchcock, confession as a form of self-beratement only ended through the intervention of another who offers forgiveness and redemption, that is, through the intervention of God; it is a *confessio fidei*, not a *confessio peccati*. Manny's final prayer, done in silence, is not a confession of his failures but a confession that man cannot stand alone from God.

In the end, only God's grace halts Manny's turmoil. He is finally redeemed and ready to begin anew, moving his family from their economic difficulties in New York to a new life in Florida and personally moving from self-beratement to self-forgiveness. In this sense, Hitchcock argued that, in the absence of any protection from forced confession, the only way to halt this ubiquitous drive for self-exposure in the early Cold War was to fortify the

self through the otherness of God. Whether symbolized by Father Logan's tortured walk through the city streets to reflect upon his sacred responsibility or by Manny Balestrero's difficult trial in which he desperately clings to his rosary beads, Hitchcock's promotion of a declaration of faith was a turn from the endless speech of compulsive confession to the silence of Christian prayer.

This was his religious articulation of the right to remain silent. While the famed director was quite pessimistic that the social, economic, and familial disruptions that he believed had weakened man's fortitude would ever be curtailed, he did believe that some sort of personal salvation could be achieved. As Manny admits at the end of *The Wrong Man*, "I guess I was hoping for a miracle."

### Notes

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